

## REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-12, 14-22, 24, and 26-29 are pending in the present application.  
Claims 9 and 20 are amended. Reconsideration of the claims is respectfully requested.

### **I. Claim Objections**

The Office Action rejects claims 9 and 20 because of minor informalities. Claims 9 and 20 are amended to overcome the objections. Since the amendments presented herein place the application in better form for appeal by materially reducing or simplifying the issues for appeal and do not raise new issues that would require further search or consideration, Applicant respectfully requests that the amendments be entered for purposes of Appeal.

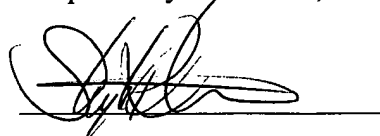
### **II. Conclusion**

It is respectfully urged that the subject application is patentable over the prior art of record and is now in condition for allowance.

The examiner is invited to call the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number if in the opinion of the examiner such a telephone conference would expedite or aid the prosecution and examination of this application.

DATE: January 14, 2004

Respectfully submitted,



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